

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

1. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Mr. Brian Tollefson on January 14, 2011.

2. The application has been amended as follows:

In the Claims

Claims 10-12 have been rewritten as follows:

-- 10. (Currently Amended) A method of cutting sheet members, comprising the steps of:

a) stacking a plurality of sheet members having air impermeability for cutting out a pattern piece from each of the sheet members;

b) fixing the stack of sheet members by vacuum suction;

c) welding the sheet members together vertically to fix upper and lower sheet members with respect to one another, said welding comprising locally heating at a weld location in a region of the sheet members near a predetermined cutting line of each pattern piece by frictional heat generated by contact between the sheet members and a knife or a punch of a cutting head, said welding includes piercing the stack with the knife

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or the punch at the weld location, moving the knife or the punch at the weld location to generate the frictional heat, and removing the knife or the punch from the stack at the weld location, wherein the region is a seam allowance of each pattern piece ~~pattern pieces~~ or a region outside the seam allowance of each pattern piece; and

d) after performing step c, cutting the sheet members along the predetermined cutting line to cut out each pattern piece, wherein the predetermined cutting line extends along each pattern piece ~~the pattern pieces~~.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of cutting sheet members according to claim 10, wherein the region is the region outside the seam allowance, and the local heating step includes locally heating ~~along a region~~ slightly outside the cutting line at a plurality of positions for each pattern piece.

12. (Currently Amended) The method of cutting sheet members according to claim 10, wherein the region is the seam allowance, and the local heating step includes locally heating ~~in the seam allowance~~ inside the cutting line at a plurality of positions for each pattern piece.--.

In the Specification

Page 2, line 6, "welded" has been changed to --welded (i.e., fused)--;

line 9, "staked" has been changed to --stacked--.

Page 4, line 10, "algorism" has been changed to --algorithm--.

Page 5, line 10, "welded" has been changed to --welded (i.e., fused)--.

The replacement paragraph for the "2nd full paragraph on page 5" filed on June 8, 2009 has been rewritten as follows:

-- FIG. 2 shows a cutting algorithm according to the embodiment. In step s1, a cutting pattern is generated. In step s2, a method of fixing the sheet members is selected. As the method of fixing the sheet members, a "welding method" and a "partial cutting method" can be used. In the welding (i.e., fusing) method, the sheet members are welded (i.e., fused) together vertically. In the "partial cutting method", uncut portions are provided at several positions along the cutting line. Further, it is possible to select another method in which neither the welding method nor the partial cutting method is carried out, and the sheet members are fixed only by vacuum suction. In the case of the welding method or the partial cutting method, vacuum suction is also carried out. The method selection of "welding", "partial cutting", or "other (vacuum suction only)" may be carried out manually by inputting the selected method into the control unit, or carried out automatically based on the data such as the material of the sheet members, the cutting pattern, or the like.--.

In the Abstract

Line 5, "welded" has been changed to --welded (i.e., fused)--.

Additional Prior Art

3. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. For example, Gerber et al., pn 3,893,881 discloses using a bonding agent to join sheets in a stack prior to cutting. Japanese Publication 62-170324 discloses using high-frequency solvent welding to join sheets of material.

Remarks

4. The above changes to the claims have been made to more clearly distinguish the claimed invention with respect to the prior art (see the Reasons for Allowance below). The above changes to the specification and abstract have been made to make editorial changes and for further clarity with respect to the term "welding".

REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE

5. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

The prior art of record, taken alone or in combination, does not teach or fairly suggest the claimed invention. For example, the closest prior art is Gerber, pn 4,653,362, wherein the Examiner has held Gerber teaches welding, but does not teach welding then cutting the welded material. The above changes to the claim have been made to more clearly distinguish over the situation in Gerber wherein one pattern in the

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material is cut and welding occurs (as taught therein), and then cutting another pattern takes place which could be fairly considered to read on the previous version of claimed invention. The changes to claim 10 are intended to clarify that the welding occurs at a weld location (i.e., position) wherein the cutter pierces the stack at the weld location, generates heat at the weld location, and is removed from the stack at the weld location. Such is not taught by Gerber since according to the teachings of Gerber, the cutter does not remain at a single location (i.e., position) but rather is moved along the cutting line for each pattern, and welding, if any, occurs while the cutter is moving along a cutting line during the cutting of one of the patterns. Further, it is noted that welding in Gerber occurs on the cutting line, while welding in the claimed invention of the present application occurs near the cutting line at a weld location as defined in the claims.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

6. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Clark F. Dexter whose telephone number is (571)272-4505. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Boyer D. Ashley can be reached on 571-272-4502. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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**/Clark F. Dexter/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3724**

cf
January 14, 2011